

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 /077 W
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P R 041615Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6942
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGEIRS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 242

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PGOV, PINT, MR
SUBJECT: CABINET CHANGES IN MAURITANIA

43*: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 211, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 194

1. SUMMARY: IN CARRYING OUT CABINET RESHUFFLE ANNOUNCED JANUARY 31 (REF A) , PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH WAS RESPONDING TO (A) IMMEDIATE NEED TO REPLACE TWO MINISTER CAUGHT UP IN MINISTRY OF FINANCE SCANDAL (REF B) AND STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL OPERATIONS, AND (B) HIS GROWING RECOGNITION OF NEED FOR NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND PERSONNEL CHANGES TO BOLSTER LAGGING PROGRAMS AND ENHANCE EFFECTICONESS OF GIRM ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS.

2. PRESSING NEED TO REPLACE MINISTER OF STATE FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT, DIARAMOUNA SOUMARE, AND MINISTER OF FINANCE, MUHAMMAD MOULAYE, BECAUSE OF THEIR DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN RECENTLY UNCOVERED SCANDAL IN MINISTRY OF FINANCE DETERMINED BOOM FQT AND TIMING OF JANUARY 31 CABIVT RESHUFFLE. ONLY BE REPLACICG OUSTED MINISTERS REASONABLY PROMPTLY COULD
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PRZVSENT EXPECT TO GET STALLED GOVERNMENTAL FPWANCIAL MACHINERY BACK INTO OPERATION, TO PRESS FULL INVESTIGATIONOF SCANDAL VIGOROUSLY, FOLLOWING EACH UNCOVERED TRACK DOWN TO VERY END, AND TO BEGIN TO REGAIN PUBLIC RESPECT AND CONFIDENCE WHICH SCANDAL HAD CAST HIS GOVERNMENT. SPLITUP OF MINISTRY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL ECONOMY AND APPOINTMENT (EVENTUALLY) OF MINISTER OF STATE TO SUPERVISE GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL OPERATIONS SHOULD IN THEORY STRENGTHEN SUBSTANTIALY PRESIDENT/ NATIONAL POLTICIAL BUREAU (BPN) OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE

MINISTRY AND ITS RELATED AGENCIES. WHILE DISAPPEARANCE OF AHMEDOU OULD TALBA (FORMER MINISTER PARTY AFFAIRS AND EX-MINISTER CULTURE) REMAINS UNEXPLAINED, HE DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN FINANCE MINISTRY SCANDAL. ONE REPORT ASSERTS HE IS SLATED TO BECOME PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT. OTHER MORE CYNICAL OBSERVERS HYPOTHESIZE THAT CULTURE--PARTY--OUT PROGRESSION SUGGESTS TALBA SIMPLY DID NOT MEASURE UP.

3. TWO-TIERED CABINET SYSTEM WAS INSTALLED 18 MONTHS AGO TO IMPROVE GIRM'S ABILITY TO EXAMINE POLICY OPTIONS AND TO PLAN IN MID AND LONG-RANGE TIMEFRAMES THROUGH APPOINTMENT MINISTERS OF STATE AND TO ENHANCE SHORT-RANGE PLANNING AND DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS BY PERMITTING

ORDINARY MINISTERS AND THEIR STAFFS TO CONCENTRATE ON IMMEDIATE TASKS AT HAND. WHILE PRESIDENT IS APPARENTLY SATISFIED GENERALLY WITH FUNCTIONING TWO-TIER CABINET AND WITH DIVISION OF LABOR AMONG MINISTERS OF STATE/BPN MEMBERS, HE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY MORE EXPLICIT, IN PUBLIC, ABOUT HIS DISSATISFACTION WITH FUNCTIONING OF BUREAUCRACY GENERALLY AND OF CERTAIN MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN PARTICULAR. (AT OPENING OF JUDICIAL YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, PRESIDENT ROUNDLY CASTIGATED MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND JUDICIARY FOR LACK OF PROGRESS ON WRITING NEW LEGAL CODES COMBINING TRADITIONAL

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NATIONAL AND MODERN LEGAL NORMS AND PROCEDURES AND INTEGRATING SHARI'A AND EUROPEAN JUDGES INTO SINGLE JUDICIARY.) THUS JANUARY 31 CHANGES IN UPPER TIER OF CABINET (I.E. MINISTER OF STATE/BPN) ARE LIMITED TO REALIGNMENTS REQUIRED TO RESPOND TO FINANCIAL SCANDAL. CONFRONTED WITH NEED TO STRENGTHEN SENIOR OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL OPERATIONS, BUT CONVINCED, APPARENTLY, THAT EXPANDED BPN WOULD BE UNWORKABLE, PRESIDENT OFFSET CREATION OF NEW MINISTRY OF STATE FOR FINANCE AND COMMERCE WITH AMALGAMATION OF MINISTRIES OF STATE FOR SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES (MINUS MINISTRY ISLAMIC AFFAIRS WHICH GOES BACK TO MINISTRE OULD BOYE WHO BEGAN HIS BPN CAREER AS "SUPER MINISTER" RESPONSIBLE FOR THINGS ISLAMIC). THUS BPN REMAINS NINE: PRESIDENT, SEVEN MINISTER OF STATE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT. ON LOWER MINISTERIAL TIER, TWO CLOSELY-RELATED MINISTRIES WITH UNDER-OCCUPIED MINISTERS (CULTURE; YOUTH AND SPORTS) WERE COMBINED. EXPERIENCE OVER PAST YEAR HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT MINISTER OF CULTURE HAS DEALT PRINCIPALLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, SINCE RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNESCO PARTICIPATION WAS RETAINED BY GIRM GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER SIDI BABA WHEN HE WAS PROMOTED TO BPN. FINALLY, TOURISM AND HANDICRAFTS, TRADITIONALLY THE ODD MAN OUT, WAS RELOCATED YET AGAIN, THIS TIME TO PLANNING WHERE OPERATING RESPONSIBILITIES OF HANDICRAFTS

WILL BE JUST AS OUT-OF-PLACE AS DEVELOPMENTAL ASPENTS OF
TOURISM WERE IN COMMERCE AND TRANSPORTATION.

4. FOUR OF PERSONNEL CHANGES WARRANT COMMENT: FIRST--
OULD BRAHAM, WHO IS A GENIAL INCOMPETENT, WAS MOVED OUT
OF BOGGED DOWN JUSTICE AND TRANSFERRED TO PARTY AFFAIRS
WHERE HIS PERMANENT LACK OF FORWARD MOTION WILL DO MINI-
MUM OF HARBM (WE HAVE NOT YET DISCOVERED SOURCE TU POLITICAL CLOUT
WHICH MAKES BRAHAM PERENIAL CABINET REGULAR.) SECOND--
MINISTRERIAL TROUBLESHOOTER OULD DIDI, WHO MANGED TO GET
NE'MA ROAD CONTRACT SIGNED AND CONSTRUCTION STARTED AND
WHO MADE A START ON COMMERCE AND TRASNPORTATION (AIR
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MAURITANIE REMAINS AS "UNFINISHED BUSINESS"), HAS CLEAR-
LY BEEN SENT TO JUSTICE TO PRODUCE THE INTEGRATED LEGAL
VQSYSTEM SO DEAR TO PRESIDENT'S HEART. THIRD--MUHAMMAD
VALL, ONE OF PRESIDENT'S CLOSET AND MOST TRUSTED AIDES,
MOVES TO STILL-TROUBLED MINISTRY COMMERCE AND TRASNPROTATION
TO CARRY FORWARD NEEDED UPGRADING. FOURTH--DESIGNATION
YESSA' WHO WAS PUBLIC PROSECUTOR UNTIL JULY 1976 TO
CLEAN UP MINISTRY OF FINANCE SUGGESTS PRESIDENT
INTENDS TO KEEP OPEN OPTION OF PROSECUTION AND WANTS IN-
VESTIGATIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT BY SKILLED AND EXPERIENCED
EXPERT TO INSURE PULLNG TOGETHER OF BEST POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT
CASE JPAINST EMBEZZLERS.

5. MOST IMPORTANT UNRESOLVED QUESTION IS IDENTITY OF
PERSON PRESIDENT HAS CHOSEN (OR IS CONSIDERING) ZOR ELE-
VATION TO BPN IN NEWLY-CREATED POST OF MINISTER OF STATE
FOR FINANCE AND COMMERC (THE HALF OF SIDI 'ABDALLAH'S
OLD NATIONAL ECONOMY SECTOR WHICH HE WIL EVENTUALLY SUR-
RENDER). GIVEN CONTINUING BLACK-MOORISH TENSION AND BE-
LIEF BY BLACKS THAT BPN RACIAL BALANCE STRUCK IN 1975 (5
MOORS, 2 BLACKS, 1 HALF BLACK-HALF MOOR PLUS MOORISH
PRESIDENT) CONSTITUTES PRECEDNET WHICH MUST BE FOLLOWED,
EXPECTATION IS THAT OUSTED SOUMARE WILL BE REPLACED BY
ANOTHER BALCK, OF THREE BLACKS CURRENTLY IN CABINET,
IBRAHIMA BA IS ONLY ONE WITH SUFFICIENT STATURE EVEN TO
BE CONSIDERED. BUT WHILE BA IS CLEARLY CABINET FRONT-
RUNNER, HE IS IN ABSOLUTE TERMS STILL TOO YOUNG, TOO IN-
EXPERIENCED, AND TOO SOFT TO QUALIFY FOR MEMBERSHIP IN
MAURITANIAN "DIRECTOIRE". NEVERTHELESS, SINCE THERE
DO NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY OTHER CANDPEATES IN THE PARTY,
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, OR PRIVATE SECTOR WHO COMMAND ANY
BETTER "MIX" OF COMPETENCE, POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT, AD-
MINISTRATIVE EXPEREINCE, AND TOUGHNESS (INTELLECTUAL,
PSYCHIC AND POLITICAL), IBRAHIMA BA MAY WELL BE TAPPED.
IN ANY EVENT, SINCE NATIONAL COUNCIL IS NOT SCHEDULED
TO MEET UNTILMARCH 15 TO ELECT NEW BPN MEMBER (READ:
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RUBBERSTAMP PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH'S CHOICE), NOUAKCHOTT
POLITICAL TOUTS ARE GEARING UP FOR SIX WEEK FIELD DAY.

HANDYSIDE

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

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